



April 2, 2020 | Vol. 24 • Issue 1.1

www.amusementtoday.com

Amusement industry helps light the way for hope

We're familiar with things
that go **UPSIDE DOWN**

We also know that if you follow
the rules, you **arrive safely** in the station

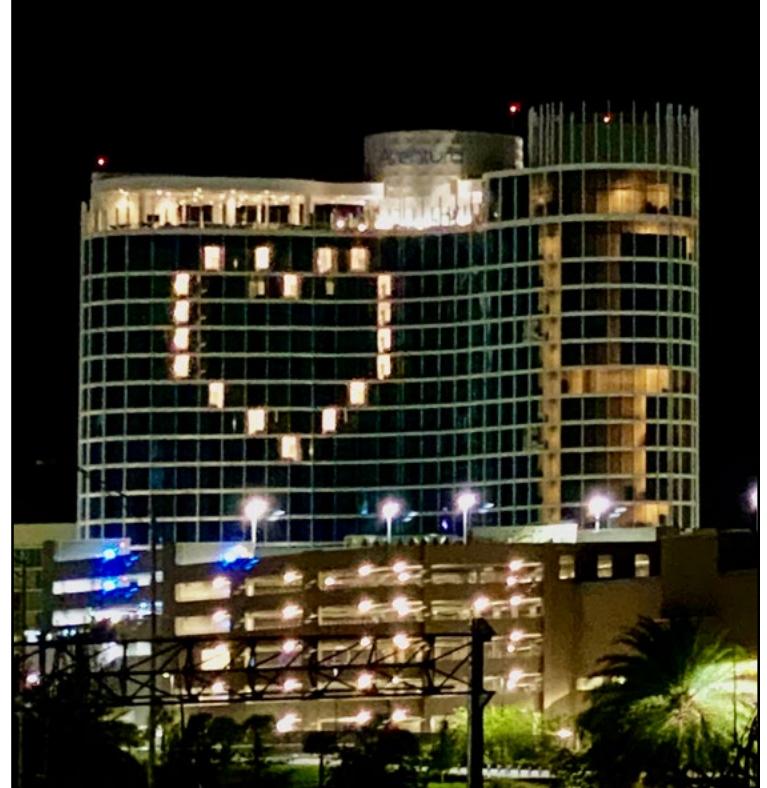
Louisville, let's stick together

Ed Hart
CEO Kentucky Kingdom



As the nation — and the world — battles the COVID-19 pandemic, the amusement and attractions industry is doing its best to keep people's spirits up, remind them that better days are ahead and to be the light at the end of the tunnel. Demonstrations of hope by the attractions industry are being seen and enjoyed worldwide. Kentucky Kingdom took out billboards throughout Louisville reminding the community that they were in this together with them (above left). Playland's Castaway Cove showed everyone they can always look forward to the future by keeping its Ferris wheel illuminated (above right). Walt Disney World Resort and Universal Orlando Resort illuminated several of the resorts' hotel towers with hearts (Universal's Aventura pictured right). Carnival Cruise ships were seen off the coast of Florida with the message "We will be back" lit up across them (below right). Entertaining guests in their homes, Disneyland's Dapper Dans (below left) performed live via the internet, taking requests and harmonizing from their living rooms.

COURTESY KENTUCKY KINGDOM, PLAYLAND'S CASTAWAY COVE, WEAR-TV, DISNEY PARKS;
AT/ DAVID FAKE



Get the most up-to-date industry news from
Amusement Today,
AmusementToday.com and
EXTRA! EXTRA! Your Desktop Edition
daily email newsblast!

INSIDE

- Industry Voices...Pages 2-3
- Theme parks find silver linings...Pages 4-5
- Manufacturer's and suppliers forge on...Pages 6-7
- Insurance, finance companies find solutions...Page 8
- Industry organizations guide members...Page 9
- Family-owned parks display hope...Pages 12-13
- Carnivals, midways strive onward...Pages 14-15
- FECs eager to welcome back families...Page 16
- Water parks look to keep flowing...Page 17



AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

The queue is forming



Robinson

I know we're all looking forward to parks opening their gates again and welcoming guests. We're eager to show off new attractions, get the carousels turning and hearing the familiar clicking of a coaster's lift hill. I'm here to remind all of us, that we aren't the only ones.

As much as we're a part of the amusement industry, we often lose sight of just how much parks and attractions mean to the world at large. They aren't just random rides, entertainment and distractions.

Theme and amusement parks are the first job for many teenagers. Roller coasters and Ferris wheels are where kids of all ages learn the payoff for conquering their fears. At some point in everyone's life, they've tried to win a prize at a midway game for a date or a child and, if won, that prize held a special place in someone's heart.

Even if Tunnel of Love rides have been phased out, taking a date through a dark ride is still part of our pop culture. Reaching for the brass ring remains a symbol of achieving excellence, even with only a precious few brass ring dispensers still in operation on carousels.

Kids cheer when their parents surprise them with a Walt Disney World trip. A season pass to a theme or water park is an easy holiday gift for parents they know children will love. Any teen on a date wanting to buck the dinner-and-a-movie trend immediately suggests mini-golf or laser tag.

Parks and attractions are woven into our world. They've been that way since the days Coney Island first welcomed guests in Brooklyn for an evening out.

My parents met in an amusement park. My grandmother's sister met her husband at one. My uncle helped build one. And so on. I've been around the amusement industry my entire life. I even learned to play t-ball behind the kiddieland of the local park and took several of my first dates there when I was a teen.

It wasn't until recent weeks that I realize how much of my life — how much of everyone's life — we've taken for granted. The coasters aren't rolling and the Ferris wheels are turning ... yet. But, they will.

It's with all those years around parks behind me that I know the industry will survive this current shutdown and I know the world around it is looking forward to it.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Tim Baldwin, tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Picture the day

We've been in this new state of normal for just mere weeks. Each of us — the park operator, the vendor, the manufacturer, the fan — are all waiting for everything to return to the real normal. Forced into working from our homes, we've all undoubtedly given some thought to the weeks and months ahead.

As we slog our way through the restraints of this outbreak crisis, we should be mindful of one thing — the amusement industry will open again. We need to picture that day. We need to picture how we will greet those first returning customers when things resume. We need to envision the exciting charge of completing the new projects. We need to hold on to the feeling of hearing people scream and laugh. We need to picture that; it will help get us through.

Social media is thick with stories of people getting some significant spring cleaning done as they are confined to their houses. So many tasks are put aside thinking we will "get to



Baldwin

them one day." Confined to our homes, several people have accepted that "one day" is staring each of them in the face. They have embraced the fact that now is the time.

Each state and business have their own set of restrictions and circumstances. Some workers are required to be at home. Others have a little leeway to go into the park and accomplish certain jobs. Regardless of your situation, is there a task you may have wanted to accomplish but just put it off for another day? It may be to paint a certain bench, a door or a railing. It may be to organize a history project you have wanted to have on hand. Is there long-overdue communication in which you need to connect to a colleague or friend? Is there a marketing pitch you were wanting to develop? Dive in. When that one day arrives when the music starts and the rides whirl and the popcorn pops, you'll be glad you've accomplished it.

That day is coming. Picture it.

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.



Call **(817) 460-7220**

for advertising, circulation or editorial inquiries



Amusement Today is an independent, privately-owned trade newspaper published 14 times per year by Amusement Today Inc., P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005. Print issues are \$50 per year and are mailed Presort Standard Postage (permit No. 2069) Pre-Paid Fort Worth, Texas. The entire contents of this newspaper, and its related websites, are Copyrighted and Trademarked 2020 by Amusement Today Inc., all rights reserved.

Address: P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005-5427, USA

Deliveries: 2004 E. Randol Mill Road #502, Arlington, Texas 76011, USA

Phone: (817) 460-7220

Fax: (817) 265-NEWS (6397)

Websites: www.AmusementToday.com, www.GoldenTicketAwards.com

Founder & Publisher

Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220
gslade@amusementtoday.com

Accounting & Classified

Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220
spiccola@amusementtoday.com

Assistant Office Manager, Circulation

Savannah Breen • (817) 460-7220
sbreen@amusementtoday.com

Advertising

Sue Nichols • (615) 477-5432
snichols@amusementtoday.com

Editorial

Tim Baldwin • (972) 697-9745
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Dean Lamanna • (817) 460-7220
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 843-3050
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Editor & Production Manager

John Robinson • (513) 256-1441
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Monthly Contributors

David Fike, Bubba Flint,
Lottie Minick, Richard Munch,
Janice Witherow

Association Memberships

ACE, AIMS International, ASTM, IAAPA, IISF,
IRT/iROC, NAARSO, NEAAPA, NJAA, OABA,
PAPA, PACE, SLA, TTIA, WWA

Industry Affiliated Charities

Give Kids the World Village, Morgan's Wonderland,
National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives

Industry Voices

Unprecedented

Hal McEvoy, President and CEO, IAAPA



McEvoy

Unprecedented. That is the word on everyone's mind. In early January, IAAPA began responding to COVID-19 and its unprecedented effects around the world. First, the coronavirus began affecting the attractions industry in the Asia-Pacific region, and now, its effects can be felt in just about every city and every country. While we are doing our part to "flatten the curve," we are also remaining positive and looking ahead with hope. This is a time of uncertainty. The global attractions industry, along with so many other industries around the world, has all but stopped. Every day I talk to members who are worried about their businesses, their employees, their families — and each other.

Look behind the global attractions industry's greatest rides, shows, food and beverage offerings, games, engineering and proactive maintenance, and you'll find talented individuals. Our industry is rooted in people. And this global crisis is impacting people.

Currently, our members are using innovation and passion to adjust their businesses so that they can continue to support their employees and communities. Manufacturers and suppliers are pivoting to produce personal protective equipment. Attractions are donating food and supplies to their communities and advocating on behalf of their employees.

At IAAPA, we focus on connections. We have the privilege of being the connector for more than 6,000 companies and individual members. Throughout this crisis, we have created new ways to strengthen these global connections. A dedicated resource page on our website provides critical information for members about IAAPA's advocating efforts in every region, updated information from leading health authorities and easy access to exclusive resources. Technology has allowed us to be nimble, and we have hosted webinars, Facebook Lives, chats on Twitter, conference calls and more — helping us to keep members connected with each other. Together, we host important conversations about our industry. With each interaction, with each program, with each connection, we come together.

For more than 100 years, IAAPA has served every facet of the attractions industry. Now more than ever, we are here to serve our members and work alongside them as they make difficult decisions in an uncertain time. We will continue to be there every step of the way.

This global crisis will pass. The attractions industry is resilient, and we will emerge in new ways. Families around the world will look to us to help provide smiles and create new memories. I am certain we will get through this challenge. We will continue to come together, work together and support each other in ways that are, truly, unprecedented.

Sunnier days are ahead

Damien Latham, Board Chair, World Waterpark Association



Latham

One could argue that our global community has never faced a bigger challenge than the one we are facing with the COVID-19 pandemic. This virus has touched every part of our lives in every part of the world. Truly, these are dark and difficult times, but we should never lose hope in our ability to bounce back when faced with a challenge. We are temporarily down, but we are definitely not out.

If we can all stay focused on who we are and what we provide to our guests, we will once again find ways to share laughter, build memories, teach children to swim and save lives. As waterpark owners, operators, designers, suppliers and developers, we already have a unique set of skills that will allow us to step forward with recreational activity once we are given the all-clear to open up by our state and local health departments. After all, many of us are seasonal business operators, which means we are used to accomplishing a lot in a short amount of time.

Right now, we need to listen to the advice being provided to our businesses by our local officials, and we should continue to advocate for the needs of our businesses and our industry. Next up, while we wait for when we can safely reopen, there are a number of things we can do now to be ready for that time.

First, we need to ensure that communication is happening with our team members, our key stakeholders and our guests. While we might not have all the answers right now, we can still be a resource to our furloughed employees. We can still communicate meaningful, hopeful messages to our guests through social media.

Second, we need to access our financial health, make some assumptions on what a prolonged shutdown will mean for our businesses and explore what options are available in stimulus packages to potentially shore up our bottom lines. Some questions you might seek to answer include: What non-critical spending has happened and where can I reevaluate my marketing efforts to get ready for reopening? How quickly can I complete a line-by-line review of my expenses?

The World Waterpark Association board and staff are working hard to provide a trusted repository of information and resources to our members during this difficult time. Whether it is through our ramped-up webinar program schedule or information curated on our COVID-19 website page (waterparks.org/COVID-19), we are here to serve and support our industry so that we all can return to serving our guests in the future.

Midways will shine again

Sharon Barlow, Editor, Midway Magazine

For more than a century, the travel amusement industry has logged millions of miles, served countless sticks of cotton candy and candy apples, and given even more rides on merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels, Tilt-a-Whirls, or Himalayas. Generations of great show owners have welcomed generations of guests to their midways, eliciting smiles bright enough to rival the most brilliant lights. Yet 2020 will now always be remembered as the year the lights went out. The music of the carousel was silenced, and the Ferris wheel ceased to turn. Millions of people watched in disbelief as great events like the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and the Miami Dade Youth Festival closed their gates to stop the spread of COVID-19.

In the beginning of February, the show owners' greatest concern was their spot in the lineup for receiving their H-2B labor, and the carnivals like Butler Amusements, North American Midway Entertainment, Ray Cammack Shows and Wade Shows were the objects of envy, not so much because of their size or grandeur, but because of their early start dates insuring they would have their help. Now, Danny Huston, owner of North American Midway Entertainment, talks of the difficult decision he made not just to send his help back but the difficulties in even finding airports where they could fly out. Similarly, Ben Pickett of Ray Cammack Shows tells of sending a large percentage of their help back with a return ticket that he hopes they will be able to use while the ones who chose to stay are readjusting their lives to include social distancing. Bill Johnson of Fantasy Amusements is grateful that he was allotted Group D.

I must admit I am still somewhat new to this industry. What I know of it, I have learned from you. For little more than five years, you have been sharing your stories with me and allowing me to then share those stories with others. Honestly, I'm not completely sure what Doc Rivera, the curator for the Showmen's Museum, means when he says, "with it." I am, however, amazed by it, blessed by it and truly inspired by it. One thing that has always impressed me most is the indomitable spirit of the American carnival from the owners to the foremen to the ride operators to the concessionaires and the many others who make this industry move. As I have spent the last few days listening to the plans of just a few of these great people, and hearing the ideas of companies like McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance and Firestone Financial as to how they want to assist their partners during these times, I have no doubts that the age of the American carnival is far from over. Yes, the first few months of 2020 are just the ashes of a fire that started to burn so brightly, but just as out of the ashes the phoenix rises, so will this great industry.

Working through unparalleled times

Andrew Mellor, Editor, Interpark

We are in the midst of an unprecedented and, to be blunt, very scary period of our lives as COVID-19 wreaks havoc across the world. It's difficult to see where it will all end and what shape the attractions industry will be in when it does. I guess we can only hope that the virus passes as quickly as it arrived.

Here in the UK we are now in total lockdown, partly because so many people continued to ignore government advice by going out and failing to adhere to the social distancing recommendations to help avoid further spread of the virus, but also as part of the extreme measures necessary to beat the pandemic. We can only leave our homes for four specified reasons and pretty much every activity we take for granted has been halted. When it will all get back to normal again is totally unknown at the present time.

Theme parks and attractions are also being hit very hard as we all know, and despite plans for many just a few short weeks ago to open at the usual time for the start of the new season, I don't know of any now that have not delayed their opening. The vast majority here and elsewhere in Europe are staying closed for the foreseeable future.

But also as I write, there are just the smallest signs that some countries are winning the battle. I've been reading about a "flattening" of Germany's coronavirus infection curve as the upward trend in cases the country has been seeing appeared to be leveling off. Further afield some parks in Japan and China are reopening, albeit on a limited basis and in a lot of cases with outdoor attractions only. Hopefully, though, it's a sign that the worst of the pandemic is over in those countries.

Interestingly, some European park operators are taking action to ensure that guests continue to at least get a taste of what they have to offer during this unusual period and to help keep youngsters entertained. Headquartered in Belgium, and with both outdoor and indoor venues, the Plopsa Group, for example, is holding daily competitions and distributing promotions via Facebook, while from the Dutch park Efteling, there is a performance of the show Fairytale Struggle the Musical on YouTube that lasts for well over an hour. Other parks are doing similar things, and more will no doubt follow suit, so at least in the interim period before they eventually open, venues are able to give guests a teaser of what they can look forward to in (hopefully) a few weeks' time.

The thing to remember is that we will get through this, and we will see our parks and attractions reopening at some point. And boy will everyone be more than ready to enjoy them once again.



Barlow



Mellor

U.S. theme parks find silver linings, continue to engage patrons

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

NORTH AMERICA — While the COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a severe blow to businesses and national economies worldwide, and recovery will be slow, some bright spots and forward thinking have emerged from the U.S. attractions industry's theme park sector while operations are temporarily suspended.

That is not to say that companies have not been scrambling as the spread of the novel coronavirus, which was still increasing in the U.S. at the start of April after paralyzing much of Asia and Europe, scuttled new ride debuts and park reopening/seasonal opening dates. "Like everyone in the industry, we are diligently working through a number of issues that are demanding our complete focus," said **Laurie Tardif**, corporate spokesperson for Sandusky, Ohio-based **Cedar Fair Entertainment Co.**, in an emailed response to *Amusement Today* that reflected the collective and unprecedented challenges facing operators.

When **The Walt Disney Co.** and **NBCUniversal** announced the closure of their Southern California and Central Florida resort facilities in mid-March — Disney's shutdown will last until further notice and Universal's until at least April 19 — other theme park operators quickly followed suit. All have since posted and updated announcements on their websites and social media channels.

Company representatives typically conveyed a gracious, if understandably uncertain, personal tone.

"The safety and well-being of our guests and associates are always our top priorities," said **Richard Zimmerman**, Cedar Fair president and CEO, expressing hope that the company's 11 North American parks could open in mid-May or soon after. "Thanks to our guests and associates for their support and cooperation during this ever-evolving situation. Your loyalty to our family of parks is invaluable."

"Our goal is to support our team members and our communities by never compromising the safety of guests or employees," echoed **Mike**



As shutdowns went into effect, theme parks donated large quantities of perishable foods to nonprofit organizations. The Disney resorts in Orlando and Anaheim gave to the Central Florida and Orange County, Calif., chapters of Second Harvest Food Bank (top photos), while Six Flags Over Georgia gave to The Center for Children & Young Adults, a private shelter (right).

COURTESY DISNEY PARKS BLOG, SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

Spanos, president and CEO of Grand Prairie, Texas-based **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.**, indicating that the chain's U.S. parks would remain shuttered until at least mid-May. "On behalf of everyone at Six Flags, thank you for your trust in us. I look forward to seeing you out in our parks."

Leaders of several individual parks offered empathetic messaging, as well, including **Craig Ross**, president of **Dollywood Parks and Resorts** — operated by **The Dollywood Co.**, a partnership between **Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE)** of Branson, Missouri, and entertainer **Dolly Parton**.

"Based on the ever-changing developments, we are looking daily at all of our options to present an exciting and entertaining 2020 season that is a great experience for our guests," said Ross, who was hoping the Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, facilities could open in May. "But our first priority is the safety of our hosts and guests."

Added Parton: "We need to focus on good health and praying for those who are affected. We know brighter days are ahead."

Like most of the other major theme park companies, Dollywood signaled its commitment to guidelines and directives from medical experts, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, and local governments during the

crisis. In addition to posting CDC guidelines in common areas, the company has already implemented additional sanitation measures — installing 300 more hand-sanitation stations throughout its resort properties, adjusting food and beverage service in accordance with current food safety recommendations, and increasing training and reinforcement in its traditionally rigorous cleaning and disinfection standards.

Disney, which, like Universal, is continuing to pay its hourly park workers through at least mid-April, also highlighted its increased sanitation and hygiene protocols for guests and employees. In addition to training reinforcement, these included the addition of easy-access hand-washing and hand-sanitizing facilities, frequent cleaning and wash-down of outdoor locations, and defined cycles for the frequent cleaning and disinfection of targeted areas.

"We are focused on the health, safety and well-being of our guests and Cast Members," the company said in a statement appearing on the **Walt Disney World Resort** website.

Food for thoughtfulness

The attractions industry's temporary halt created an inadvertent bounty for food banks and charitable organizations, which benefited from donations of surplus food from parks at a time of espe-



cially crucial community need.

Disney filled trucks with contributions. **Walt Disney World Resort (WDW)** shared its inventory of fresh salads, greens and cooked hot items with **Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida**, while **Disneyland Resort** sent its surplus to **Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County** in Southern California, according to the company's blog.

"These donations would not be possible without the dedication of cast members behind the scenes who collect, sort and distribute every item to ensure it's delivered with the highest level of freshness, keeping food safety top of mind," said **Tajiana Ancora-Brown**, WDW's director of external affairs. "We feel an immense sense of pride and excitement every time we [make] deliveries in the community."

"Donations of food, especially shelf-stable food, will be critical in the days and weeks ahead to serve those in our community impacted by the COVID-19 crisis," said

Harald Herrmann, CEO of Second Harvest's Orange County chapter.

Both Disneyland Resort and WDW have an ongoing commitment to reducing food waste, and unserved food from select locations has been donated regularly to support those in need. Each year, the resorts donate over 1.2 million meals to their local Second Harvest Food Bank chapters.

Elsewhere in Central Florida, **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** delivered approximately 5,500 pounds of food to **Feeding Tampa Bay**, a food rescue and distribution organization. As with other properties of **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment (SWP)**, which was continuing to pay full-time employees for the extent of its shutdown, the park is closed indefinitely.

Six Flags Over Georgia in Austell provided 114 boxes of fruit, vegetables and dairy totaling 1,600 pounds to **The Center for Children &**

PARKS

Continued from page 4

Young Adults, a private, non-profit shelter based in nearby Marietta. Six Flags was committed to serving the community in "this unprecedented situation," said **Dale Kaetzel**, park president, noting that the effort helped address the need created by school closures and quarantines. "We are grateful for the partnership with The Center and look forward to providing those living [there] with this nutritious food in a time of uncertainty."

Also, on March 23, the parking lot at **Kennywood** in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, became a staging area for food distributed by the **Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank** to residents in need, including many unemployed as a result of the pandemic. The park, owned and operated by Newport Beach, California-based **Palace Entertainment**, tentatively plans to start its season May 2.

Online diversions

With patrons in the most populous areas of the U.S. ordered to stay home and/or practice social distancing, theme parks — mindful of brand maintenance — turned to delivering amusement and education via the web and social media.

Palace Entertainment's **Idlewild & SoakZone** in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, stepped forward after reading a Facebook post from a frustrated mother who was trying to juggle working from home and assisting her children with online school work. The park added a Kids' Page to its website with printable, amusement-themed activity sheets such as coloring pages and word searches.



Despite park closures, construction reportedly is continuing on Universal Orlando Resort's fourth theme park, **Epic Universe**. COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT



Theme parks are keeping patrons and fans engaged remotely via various digital platforms. News of wild animal births at Disney's Animal Kingdom, including a female zebra foal and a female porcupine, was shared by Disney Parks Blog (above). Idlewild & SoakZone in Ligonier, Pa., offered printable coloring pages (right) and other activity sheets online.

COURTESY DISNEY PARKS BLOG, IDLEWILD & SOAKZONE

"We wanted to offer families a bit of a break from the craziness that is our new 'normal,'" explained **Jeff Croushore**, the park's director of marketing, to *AT*. "Now, especially, we all need to take a break from our work and enjoy some smiles together."

Idlewild is eyeing May 16 as a possible launch date for its 143rd season.

SWP's **Sesame Place** parks in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, and (debuting in 2021) San Diego provided coloring pages via their websites featuring the beloved *Sesame Street* characters. The company's Busch Gardens and SeaWorld properties offered free online educational resources dedicated to wild animals and nature, as did Orlando's **Gatorland** through its Facebook and

YouTube channels.

Additionally, the SeaWorld parks and HFE's **Wild Adventures Theme Park** in Valdosta, Georgia, posted assurances that their animal collections would continue receiving round-the-clock attention — with SeaWorld noting that the CDC has found "no evidence that coronavirus is transmissible from humans back to animals." The Valdosta facility, meanwhile, was eyeing a May reopening.

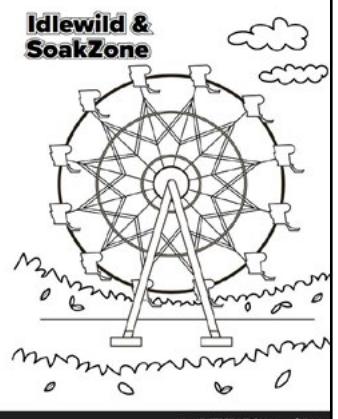
Disney was keeping park fans actively apprised of developments at **Disney's Animal Kingdom**, posting news and photos of the Central Florida park's latest animal newborns. They included a female zebra foal and a female baby porcupine, or porcupette.

"Although Walt Disney World Resort is temporarily closed, **Disney's Animal Care Team** is continuing to provide top-notch care to the thousands of animals who roam our savanna and seas," wrote **Dr. Mark Penning**, the Disney parks' vice president of animals, science and environment, on the company's blog. "We are diligently following state and federal guidelines to ensure the health and safety of our dedicated team."

For those seeking home-delivered park entertainment on the human end of the spectrum, Disney did not disappoint — presenting a first-of-



PITTSBURGH IS KidsBURGH



Nintendo World attractions at **Universal Studios Hollywood** and **Universal Studios Japan** in Osaka.

"Our construction projects around the globe... all remain active and on track under protocols established by government officials and with their support," wrote **Tom Williams**, chairman and CEO of **Universal Parks & Resorts**.

Although business in any area of the industry may be far from proceeding as usual, there is a vital undercurrent of confidence that it will recover and emerge stronger from this extended pause. There is also the expectation that when the gates are flung wide once again, the reaction of patrons will be nothing short of joyous.

In the meantime, through their customary innovation, theme parks are doing their part to unite and heal.

"More than ever, our world needs to hear 'I love you,'" said Idlewild's Jeff Croushore. "We can all do small things to help our neighbors and spread kindness. It is what we are called to do."

—Additional reporting by Tim Baldwin

Manufacturers and suppliers forge through the outbreak crisis

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

INTERNATIONAL —As the COVID-19 global pandemic makes its harsh impact on businesses around the world, manufacturers and suppliers are finding their paths through ongoing events.

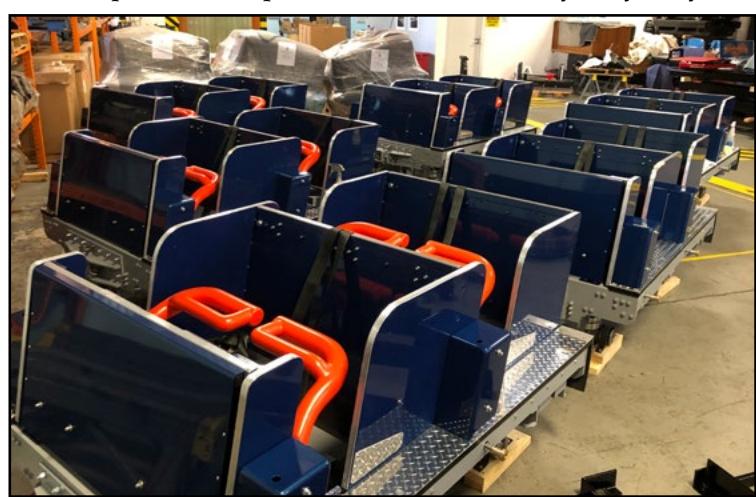
"When we are cleared to work again, we have a train to ship out to Six Flags Over Georgia immediately," **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.**, President Tom Rebbie told *Amusement Today*. "We have others ready to assemble and get out to parks too."

Situations vary from state to state and country to country. Pennsylvania requirements first indicated that PTCI had to shut down, then it was allowed to resume work, but mere days later was told to shut down completely.

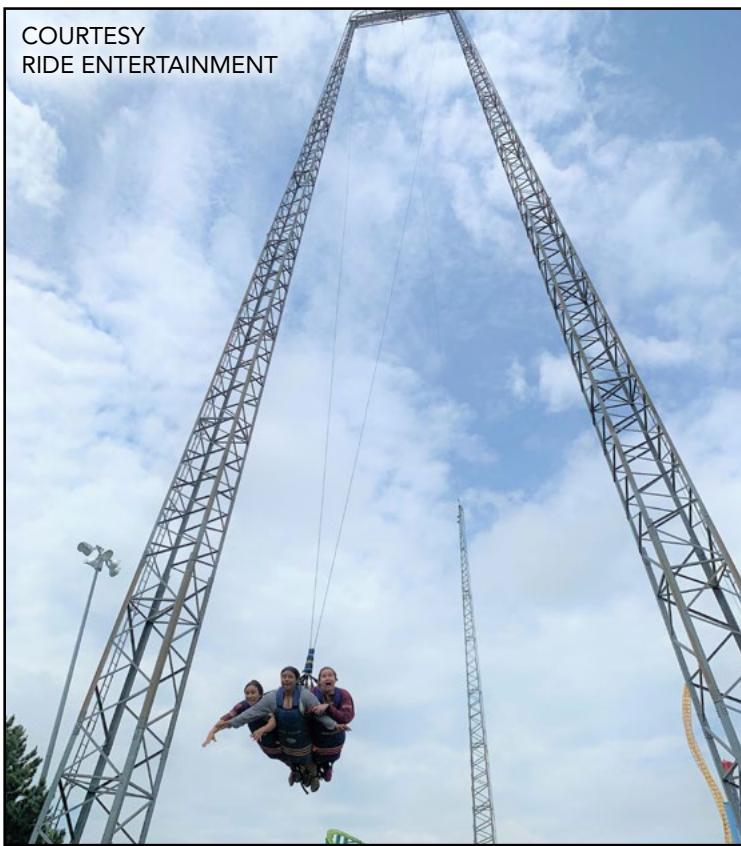
"When we get back, our employees are not going to fall into a hole. They're going to be taken care of," said Rebbie.

"Currently, **Larson International** is able to maintain normal operation through this slowdown," said **Hunter Novotny**, mechanical engineer. "We are doing our best to keep everyone healthy with cleaning stations for tools, hands and other items throughout the shop. We are following all county, state, and federal mandates and have constructed a lengthy 'what if' road map for the foreseeable future. Our goal is to try and weather the storm with the rest of the country whether that is from our shop or from home."

Novotny reports that if any park or carnival is doing ride preparation for the season, Larson's ride and parts department is stocked and ready for incoming orders of rides or parts for its portfolio.



Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters awaits the signal to ship this train to Six Flags Over Georgia. COURTESY TOM REBBIE/PTCI



of products. "We are sanitizing incoming and outgoing boxes for precaution and will do our best to maintain our availability through these times," he said.

"Our employees have been briefed on our processes of going forward as long as the virus is a concern," Novotny told AT. "We are asking anyone who does not feel 100% to stay home without question and are using the CDC guidelines to request employees to self-monitor symptoms for several days or contacting a medical professional before consideration of return. We have policies in place for deep cleaning our facility in the case of an exposure to the plant and are doing our best to stay up to date with all of the ever-changing rules and recommendations."

Novotny says the company is trying to determine if there is any way they can

help the heroes of the medical and food supply industries for the time being and are hoping they can.

Premier Rides has remained fully functional through the crisis with a focus on Premier team/family members' safety and a continuation on our high level of service to our valued clients," said **Sara Seay**, director of sales and marketing. "Premier has gone beyond the state requirements and imposed a number of detailed directives to ensure worker safety. Safety is the key consideration followed by the desire of the team members to continue to produce for our clients. Premier is always focused on innovation, so we are using new technologies to allow in-office staff to work seamlessly with remote workers. The same technologies are being used with our clients to provide a level of confidence that once the crisis subsides their projects will still be moving ahead."

"Things are getting better in Asia," said **Jim Seay**, president, Premier Rides. "We have associates at ground zero in Wuhan, and they are back at work and feeling positive about the future. Parks are reopening in Japan and China including the front areas of the Disney parks. There is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel!"

In reference to whether parts were available, they confirmed that Premier Rides just made multiple shipments to

"We are all in this together, and I think showing our humanity will allow us to get through this the best we can."

— Adam Sandy,
Ride Entertainment

parks reopening in Asia.

One of the challenges to the crisis is the evolving requirements change almost daily.

"Our installation and maintenance team has been working regionally in the mid-Atlantic on a few projects that were ongoing when the pandemic started to grow," said **Adam Sandy**, president, business development division, **Ride Entertainment**.

"Our teams have isolated, only interacting with the same team members each day while having a controlled housing environment. We are in constant communication with them and the parks where work is being performed. All of our team leaders are able to close down the job site at any time if they feel it is necessary. In addition, we have a practical work-from-home policy for all full-time employees. Maryland and New York are essentially shut down, but that has not changed our availability since our team members are always available on email and cell phones."

Ride Entertainment isn't seeing any difficulties in fulfilling parts requests. It is currently fulfilling Skycoaster

parts orders for properties that are restocking. "Our other large partners — **Gerstlauer**, **Funtime**, **Lagotronics Projects**, etc. — are shipping parts as needed. With parks in South Korea and other countries starting to reopen we are seeing orders for Skycoaster parts come in," said Sandy.

"Honestly we are taking this one day at a time. While we want our new projects, revenue shares and operations to be open, we realize that it will be a process to get past the worst of things and to get the parks up and running," he added. "That being said, we are using this time to prepare. Our teams in all our divisions will be able to hit the ground running once parks in North America start to reopen. Our operations in New York are set for the season and inspections are completed, we just need to open the doors. In addition, we can certainly help parks around the country. If any properties need help to make up time on installation or maintenance projects, we can come in like a SWAT team and help them attack large projects such

► See **SUPPLIERS**, page 7



Rides 4 U and **SBF/VISA Group** have shipped a first-of-its-kind, 70-foot-tall Air Balloon Observation Tower with a unique sports theme to Adventureland Long Island of New York. COURTESY RIDES 4 U

SUPPLIERS

Continued from page 6

as chain replacement, vehicle repair or other large off-season work that was delayed. We are all in this together, and I think showing our humanity will allow us to get through this the best we can."

Len Soled of **Rides 4 U** is staying positive. "We've been fortunate during these circumstances," Soled said. "We've continued to be here for our people, and we've been fortunate that product has arrived from Europe. We've been able to see production out of the factories."

A new **KMG** Freak Out ride from The Netherlands is going to **Paul Maurer Shows**. "It's encouraging to see product coming out," said Soled. "To know once you get the green light, you are ready to go — existing equipment and new equipment."

Soled feels the amusement industry recovers quickly in such times. "We look back through the history books. Our industry is never impacted from the economical side. It has always been affected by weather. I think that will be the case. People still need to bring entertainment to their life to bring balance. We found that even during the Depression people were spending money on amusement park rides. That was what they could look forward to," he said. "Everyone is going to want to get out of the house. Amusement parks and carnivals are going to be upbeat."

Rides 4 U has also delivered a new observation tower ride to **Adventureland** in Long Island.

"People are excited to get this new equipment and get their existing equipment up and operating. People are still having their maintenance teams go through the

attractions to get things ready. We've been busy shipping out spare parts," said Soled. "I've always maintained a high level of inventory. In the recent weeks we've put even extra parts on the shelves."

Vekoma Rides continues to work on existing and new projects and has maintained business meetings via video conference with clients on a daily basis. "Even during this difficult time, our clients are looking ahead and working on new projects and ideas with us for the next seasons. We realize that the parks suffer a considerable loss of income, however we are positive that the industry will come out of this crisis stronger than ever," said **Ricardo Etges**, global business development manager.

"Our production facilities in the Netherlands are still open and our Chinese facility is starting up again after two months' closure," Etges shared with *AT*. "It is understandable that there may be delays as our sub-vendors are also in the same situation, but for spare parts we maintain a decent stock to be able to assist our existing customers. Vekoma Rides Parts & Services is fully staffed, we are still able to support parks with phone calls, conference calls, photos and screen sharing while they remain 24-hours available for emergencies through our 24/7 emergency number for VRPS. Our goal still is to meet urgent delivery times. However, this depends on multiple external parties and government restrictions in this crisis time. Some borders are closed, and travel is restricted. So, there is a possibility that goods are delayed, and site visits cannot be made due to this."

In a prepared statement released late March, **Sunkid** confirmed that parts availability would be ongoing.

"One thing is certain: We will make it through this difficult time together and cooperate on new projects once more. That is why this is the right moment to focus on the future and to work on planning and developing new ideas and projects more intensely than ever," the statement read. Sunkid reported the planning department continues to be available through the crisis.

In times of crisis, inspirational stories abound. National news will find specific examples of people stepping up, sometimes at personal expense to work toward the greater good. The amusement industry is no stranger to these encouraging efforts.

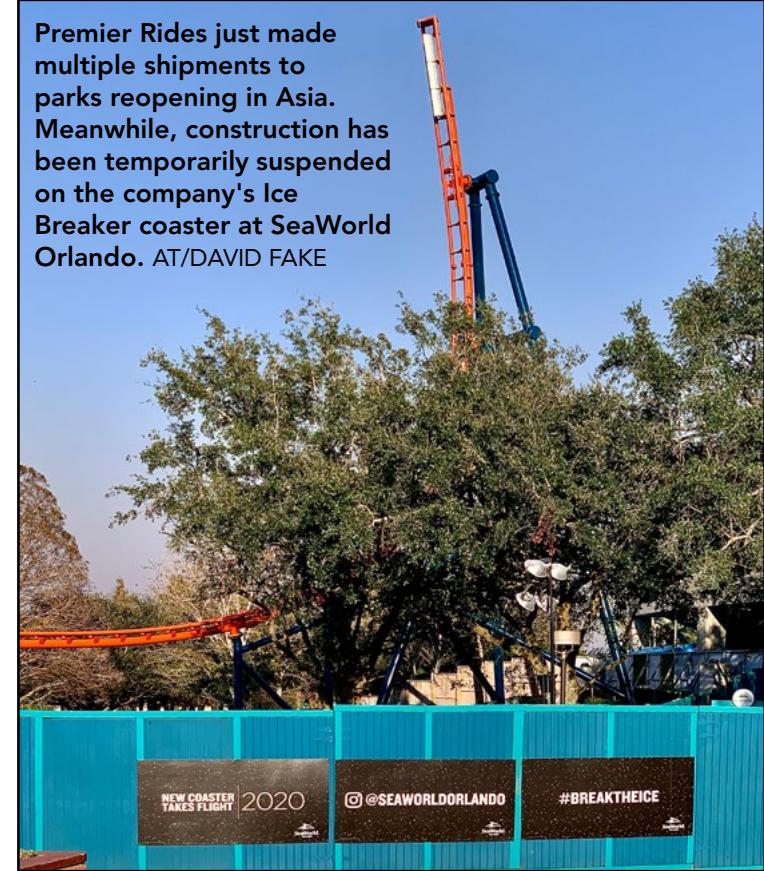
Daniels Wood Land is a theming company that builds whatever a client wants. Innovative tree houses and cabins, shooting galleries, themed sets and playgrounds — all projects that push the company into thinking creatively and producing signature pieces for each customer.

Based in California, the company was swept up with an abundance of other businesses deemed "nonessential." Enter **Ron Daniels**, president of Daniels Wood Land.

"As the crisis began to escalate, we saw things being shut down. All the shelter-in-place orders started coming down the line," Daniels said. "Talking with my upper management, one of them suggested we call our city leaders to see if there was something we could do to help. We didn't want to go home and [worry about] the problem; we wanted to help solve it."

One of the manager's next-door neighbors was a fire marshal. When asked what the city needed, the suggestion of protective gowns seemed a doable option. Personal protection equipment for first responders was in short sup-

Premier Rides just made multiple shipments to parks reopening in Asia. Meanwhile, construction has been temporarily suspended on the company's Ice Breaker coaster at SeaWorld Orlando. AT/DAVID FAKE



ply. Knowing if medical teams became exposed, they'd be "down for the count. It was going to reduce the capacity to care for the sick. That's scary! We all have a stake in this game here," said Daniels. "All of us could end up knowing someone who could pass away from this virus."

Daniels felt the fight should be personal. Recalling Henry Ford switched to making tanks during World War II, that was what connected the dots. Knowing the creation of themed environments was not possible in the weeks ahead, Daniels could get his workers creating what was really needed.

"We didn't have the materials on hand, but we were able to get a sample of what needs to be made," he told *AT*. The company was able to get the needed supplies. "Daniels Wood Land has made a career out of making things we've never done before. Every project is something we've never done before. Figuring out how

to set up this production line was something we have never done before."

With the task at hand, workers cleared out the new 37,000-square-foot facility and pushed projects out of the way. Within a matter of two days, the company was receiving orders. Finding success in obtaining more raw materials, the company was making them as fast as it could — and still is. At full capacity, the company estimates it can produce 120,000 gowns a day. Protective gowns are the main item in production, but the company has samples of face masks and face shields they are exploring.

This forward-thinking innovation has two-fold benefits: keeping employees working and filling a dire need during an extraordinary crisis.

Although these times seem devastating, the industry is getting through it and learning how to become stronger in the process.



Stepping up to meet the needs of the pandemic, Daniels Wood Land switched gears from creating themed structures to producing vital protective gowns for first responders. COURTESY RON DANIELS/DANIELS WOOD LAND

Insurance, finance companies provide solutions, relief to attractions

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — With the arrival of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and the resulting shutdowns, many parks, carnivals, and shows have not had the opportunity to open as scheduled, much less, create a 2020 cashflow. This has left numerous businesses in the amusement industry wondering how they will pay their upcoming insurance premiums and loan payments. AT reached out to several industry-specific insurance and finance companies to see what was being done to assist their amusement industry clients. What we found was an overwhelming optimism across these companies. All expressed their faith in their amusement industry clients and sang the praises of the insurance and financial industry's flexibility and willingness to step up to the plate and provide these businesses with options and solutions to alleviate the financial burden brought about by the coronavirus and the shutdowns.

For the first time ever, the entire industry has gone dark. There is no part of the indus-

try that has not been affected. However, there are large and small operators in the amusement industry. Some operators have deeper coffers to dig into in times like these, while others rely on each season's finances to stay operational.

"Unfortunately, every one of our clients are shut down due to the COVID-19 health emergency. We and our insurance partners are working on solutions to reflect the lack of business operations and exposure by our clients. We realize we are all in this together, and one solution will not fit all. Renewal dates, locations and season are all issues to be looked at, as well as what coverages are still needed, and which can be suspended or postponed," said Rick D'Aprile Vice-President of **Amusement Entertainment Risk Insurance Associates (AERIA)**, a company that provides insurance coverage to both mobile and fixed site amusement facilities. "All are impacted. The concern is that many events are canceling and not rescheduling. Also [of concern], with so many people out of work, will there be money to spend on entertainment? We hope this will all be over soon

but until then, we hope everyone stays safe and healthy."

Drew Tewksbury, Director of Sales and Marketing for **McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance** is also seeing the virus universally affecting their vast array of clients in the mobile amusement, carnival concessionaire, fixed amusement park and water park spaces. "We see a lot of facilities and shows that are, sadly, having to shut their doors and will not open during this period of challenge. All our insurance carrier partners are actively and aggressively working through the issues and providing solutions to ease the economic burden on our clientele. It's not a one-size-fits-all type of situation, but our partners are being very, very accommodating by truly being in partnership with us and our insureds through this awful, awful pandemic. We certainly understand that these are tough times for everybody, but first and foremost for us is our care for the safety and welfare of our clients and our employees. That absolutely comes first," Tewksbury said.

"I'm finding that my underwriters are very agreeable to working with my clients, but the clients and brokers need to be proactive, get in front of the ball, and let the underwriters know what's happening with their business," said **Dave Harman** of **AJG Risk Management Services**. "It's going to be really tough for everybody in our industry until this thing gets through. But I think if the clients, the parks, the carnivals are proactive, the underwriters will work with them to solve whatever problems that can be solved. I've reached out to each of my clients, asked them where they stand. I'm a glass-half-full kind of guy, and I'm going to do whatever it takes to help my clients survive. I haven't seen any insurance company say they're not going to do the same. We can't and we won't let us get this down in the dumps."

When asked what he foresees changing within the amusement industry as a result of COVID-19, **Larry Yaffe**, **ESY Financial**, and Past Chair and Trustee for the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)**, said, "I could speculate that there'll be some best practices from the standpoint of wiping things down, having more hand sanitizer and handwashing stations—much more than there were in the past. Although, a lot of our businesses have done

a really good job of that. I just don't think it was advertised, because its importance wasn't at the forefront. Until now, it wasn't necessary to advertise that kind of thing. I think that will become more prevalent, probably everywhere. There will be less people crowding together. I think they'll just be more open areas on the fairgrounds and at events. I know that OABA is putting together a list of best practices, but the requirements are really being driven by the CDC."

This sentiment is shared by **Ryan Wilkerson**, President and CEO of **HAAS & Wilkerson Insurance**: "When this is finally over, we need to give [consumers] confidence to come back and join us again. More visibly doing things like disinfecting and cleaning and putting our best foot forward will show our consumers that we're taking their safety seriously not just from a ride safety standpoint, but from a health safety standpoint, as well."

Firestone Financial, a subsidiary of **Berkshire Bank**, a Massachusetts-based nationwide business lender serving the amusement and entertainment industry, has taken a proactive approach to the current situation by offering a three-month deferral on existing loans for all who contact them requesting assistance due to the effects of COVID-19 on their businesses. "We understand the impact this may have on our customers' businesses," said **Michael Smith**, Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer of Firestone Financial. "Helping our customers preserve their businesses during this rapidly evolving and unprecedented situation is our top priority. Their focus right now should be on their own health and safety, and the health and safety of their families and employees," he said.

Rich Gockelman, carnival and amusement park commercial account executive for Firestone Financial, explained that a majority of their clients operate seasonally and are on seasonal payment plans. This year, however, they have not and/or will not be able to build up capital before their payments are due, but at the same time many have already incurred expenses. "They've already stepped up and stocked up for their opening events of the season, which are, maybe, the smaller ones, but they're important ones. These earlier spots and events kind of prime the pump and are a critical part

of their finances. So, this year many had all their employees and materials lined up, transported themselves to the spot, and then had these abrupt shutdowns. They were sitting on a couple hundred thousand dollars of food stock. That has a really negative impact on their finances. As a result, a lot of these [businesses] are very nervous because they haven't seen this type of business situation before. There's a lot of multi-generational family ownerships behind these fairs, carnivals, and independent operations. Yes, they have seen the boom and the bust of the economy before, but they've never seen anything like this type of a global pandemic and a negative downturn in their business. They are rightfully concerned about their business and about the future season. Our payment deferral should provide them with some financial flexibility to redeploy their capital to where their business needs it most. More importantly, it gives them piece of mind during these challenging times," said Gockelman.

The constant that appeared across the finance and insurance companies with whom AT spoke, is that the amusement industry hopes that with warmer weather coming, it will make the virus dissipate; that by late April or early May this will be behind us, people will be able to congregate again, and the state and local governments will do away with the bans on congregating. There is also a shared hope among this segment of the amusement industry that after this is behind us, and even though there will be a heightened concern of washing hands and sanitizing equipment, people will want to quickly get back out to the parks, fairs, and carnivals to celebrate after having been confined to their homes for weeks or months. At the same time, there is a common belief that people are still going to be a little nervous about the economy and their employment. So, they will be more cautious with how and where they spend their money.

"I think they may want to take like a staycation. Maybe like, what happened when fuel went up to \$5 a gallon. I think they will be more likely to say, 'you know what, I'm not going to spend the money this year to take my family to Disney or Universal Studios, we're going to stay local.' That means going out for, maybe, a couple-hour drive and spending a whole day with the family at a regional park, fair, or carnival," said Gockelman.

INSURANCE AND FINANCE CARRIERS

Amusement Entertainment Risk Insurance Associates (AERIA)

Gene Berger, President

email: g.berger@amusemententertainmentrisk.com
(210) 722-7671 • amusemententertainmentrisk.com

Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services

Dave Harman • email:dave_harman@ajg.com
(425) 586-1049 • ajg.com

ESY Financial

Larry Yaffe • email: larry@esyfinancial.com
(781) 929-0459 • esyfinancial.com

Firestone Financial

Rich Gockelman • email: rgockelman@firestonefinancial.com
(617) 641-9214 • mobile: (781) 241-5482
firestonefinancial.com

Haas & Wilkerson Insurance

Ryan Wilkerson, President & CEO
email: ryan.wilkerson@hwins.com
(913) 432-4400 • hwins.com

McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance

Drew Tewksbury, Director of Sales & Marketing
email: dtewksbury@mcgowaninsurance.com
(800) 237-3355 • mcgowaninsurance.com

Naughton Insurance

Kevin Naughton, President and CEO
email: kevin@naughtoninsurance.com
(401) 433-4000 • naughtoninsurance.com

OA FINANCE

Wade Muller, President • email: wade@oafinance.net
(816) 581-0033 • oafinance.net

XINSURANCE

Logan Fitzgerald, Senior Vice President of Marketing
email: loganf@xinsurance.com
(801) 304-5562 • xinsurance.com

Industry associations, organizations communicate, meet with technology

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

INTERNATIONAL —
Greg Chiecko, president and CEO of the **Outdoor Amusement Business Industry** (OABA), nailed it.

"We are an industry that lives the motto, 'the show must go on,'" he said. "Given the current state of affairs, the show is not going on, and it is completely out of our control."

Just weeks ago, owners and operators of amusement and theme parks, carnivals and fairs were in control. Openings were set. New and exciting rides and attractions already had been advertised. Carnival staff were kicking tires.

Everyone was ready to get the show on the road. With lightning speed, that all changed.

"The hardest part of coping with this crisis is not knowing when it will end," Chiecko said.

But staff and leadership of industry associations are doing everything they can to keep their members together through a stable and steady flow of information. Technology has played a huge part in the communications outpouring as so many people are working from home, self-quarantining and/or self-isolating.

Associations are creating and presenting webinars instead of meeting face-to-face. They are holding weekly phone meetings through platforms such as Zoom. Association web sites have been updated and filled with COVID-19 resource links.

Also on websites templates that can be easily used to contact Washington D.C. lawmakers are available as all of this industry wants to make sure they have a voice in D.C.

It has been a huge and cooperative endeavor.

The **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (IAAPA) global offices are helping to relate information to its world-wide audience. And through the association's COVID-19 Resource page, IAAPA is sharing advocacy efforts regionally.

IAAPA is hosting webinars and already has offered e-learning courses related to COVID-19 through its online learning management system. Topics included preparedness, crisis management, pandemic



Industry associations have been using technology such as webinars, live streaming and video conferencing to communicate and inform their members. COURTESY IAAPA

planning and working from home.

The association is producing an ongoing Q&A series with members from around the world on how they are managing the global COVID-19 situation. These topics include creating COVID-19 resources for staff, delaying opening day, clear communication and preparedness and how to engage guests when gates are closed.

"Now is the time to stay connected and to channel our powerful collective creativity to find and share innovative ideas and strategies to see each other through," said **Hal McEvoy**, IAAPA president and CEO.

"We are all in this together. Let's be sure we are there for the families, friends and colleagues who support us, including our own, and will look to our industry for fun and togetherness once this crisis has ended."

Being "all in this together" is a common phrase heard throughout the industry.

Kim Samarelli, executive director of the **New Jersey Attractions Association** (NJAA), made that very comment during a phone call meeting of the **New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (NEAAPA).



Samarelli

About 50 NEAAPA members shared their stories and support with each other.

"We are all in the same place just waiting to see what is going to take place," Samarelli said, during that phone meeting.

Hodgdon and Samarelli have urged their members to

stay in touch and informed.

"We know you all are getting a lot of emails so we don't want to inundate your inbox with more," Hodgdon said.

So he made sure members can stay connected by continually updating the NEAAPA web site and giving pertinent resource links.

Marla Calico, president and CEO, **International Association of Fairs and Expositions** (IAFE), said the organization is using a variety of tools to bring members together virtually to share ideas and information, "to use the power of the network to consider options and solutions."

"We have worked closely with the OABA's lobbyist to provide data for building a case for support from the U.S. Congress," Calico said. "We have put out the call to action to our members, asking them to contact their senators and representatives."

The association also is making last-minute changes for more relevancy. For example, Calico said a planned human resource course held online March 18, was changed to include the COVID-19 impact on human resource matters. Other courses are being adapted as well.

"I believe the strength of the association at this point in time is that our foundations is built upon members sharing with one another to strengthen the industry," Calico said.

She has been so proud as fairs are communicating with her about what they are doing to help their communities.

"Just like they always do,"

she said. "We can't even keep up with the reports but what we know is some are serving as hospitals, drive-through testing sites, coalition/warehouse for critical supplies and dormitories for quarantine/isolation."

Lori Schneider executive vice president, **Amusement and Music Operators Association** (AMOA), said she and the association's leadership has been

busy updating their web site with COVID-19 resource links.

"You know, it seems like **Amusement Expo International** (AEI) was held a year ago, there has been so much going on," Schneider said.

AEI was held March 9-11, 2020, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

"We have put webinars together and are reaching out to our members to talk to their senators and representatives in D.C.," she said. "We just want to make sure we have a voice."

AIMS International Executive Director **Mary Jane Brewer** said AIMS has been working on a new, online learning program that will enable "our certificate-holders to achieve the required continuing education units (CEUs) for renewal of all of AIMS certifications."

"We have extended the upcoming expiration dates through May 31, 2020, for all of the AIMS-certified technicians and inspectors who have certificates about to expire," Brewer said. "This will allow certificate-holders two additional months without penalty, to earn the required CEUs for renewal."

Brewer said, in addition, AIMS has been communicating with all members and other industry contracts through social networks and direct conversations.

International Ride Training's (IRT) **Cindee Huddy** said IRT is also providing online courses and leadership web events.

"We are hosting an IRT Coffee Chat with clients on Friday mornings to stay connected," Huddy said.

And while **Showmen's**

League of America is reaching out to its members, Secretary and Executive Director **Cindy Henning** said the association continues preparations for upcoming projects such as its annual meeting, trade show, and banquet and ball in late November.

"We are a resilient group, but without a game plan, it is very challenging," Chiecko said. "Most of our members feel that they will be back on the road by June, but there is no certainty. The best we can do is pray, wait and hope..."



Henning

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

International Association of Amusement Park and Attractions (IAAPA)
(321) 319-7600
iaapa.org

Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)
(407) 848-8010
oaba.org

New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (NEAAPA)
(877) 999-8740
neaaa.org

New Jersey Attractions Association (NJAA)
(732) 240-0000
njamusements.com

International Association of Fairs and Expos (IAFE)
(417) 862-5771
fairsandexpos.com

International Ride Training (IRT)
ridetraining.com

AIMS International
(714) 425-5747
aimsintl.org

Showmen's League of America
(312) 733-9533
showmensleague.org

Pennsylvania Amusement Parks and Attractions (PAPA)
paamusementparks.com

THANK YOU TO OUR INDUSTRY ADVERTISERS!

RIDES 4 U • WHITEWATER WEST • LARSON INTERNATIONAL • McGOWAN ALLIED SPECIALTY INSURANCE • PROSLIDE TECHNOLOGY • ZAMPERLA • ARM INC. • MONTGOMERY INN RIBS • ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSTRUCTION
CHANCE RIDES • POLIN WATERPARKS & POOL SYSTEMS • ZEBEC, INC. • MACK RIDES GMBH & Co KG • S&S / SANSEI TECHNOLOGIES • PHILADELPHIA TOBOGGAN COASTERS • EWORKS PRO • PRIME/X INSURANCE CO.
PREMIER RIDES, INC. • AERIA • GERSTLAUER AMUSEMENT RIDES GMBH • RALPH S. ALBERTS CO. • ITAL INTERNATIONAL LLC • RCI ADVENTURE PRODUCTS • SUNKID • RIDE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP OF COMPANIES
WATERLOO TENT & TARP CO. • KAY PARK-REC CORP. • IRVINE ONDREY ENGINEERING • GREAT COASTERS INTERNATIONAL • SETPOINT, INC. • ELI BRIDGE COMPANY • AMUSE RIDES • INDIANA TICKET/MUNCIE NOVELTY CO.
FIRESTONE FINANCIAL • INTAMIN AG • BOB'S SPACE RACERS • ARTHUR J. GALLAGHER RISK MGMT SVCS, INC. • LJM & ASSOCIATES, INC. • ZIERER GMBH & CO. KG • VEKOMA RIDES MANUFACTURING B.V. • BAYNUM PAINTING, INC.
KUMBAK SERVICES B.V. • SOARING EAGLE Zipline, Inc. • INTERMARK RIDE GROUP • HAAS & WILKERSON • GOULD MANUFACTURING • FREDERIKSEN INDUSTRIES • CHAIRKIT NORTH AMERICA • NACE INTERNATIONAL • WISDOM RIDES, INC.
WHITEWATER WEST ATTRACTIONS • WIEGAND.WATERRIDES GMBH • HUSS PARK ATTRACTIONS GMBH • BERTAZZON • JACK ROUSE ASSOCIATES • DIPPIN' DOTS, LLC. • DYNAMIC ATTRACTIONS, LTD • ELLIS & ASSOCIATES, INC. • SEMNOX



RES GMBH • LAGOTRONICS PROJECTS B.V. • NORTON AUCTIONEERS OF MICHIGAN • SEVERN LAMB • AUDIO INNOVATORS • WAPELLO FABRICATIONS CO. • INTERNATIONAL RIDE TRAINING • ETF • GULL WING INDUSTRIES • MILLENNIUM ELASTOMERS
CREATIVE POLYMERS • NORTHWEST COASTERS • SKYLINE ATTRACTIONS LLC • SKYTRANS MFG., LLC • MOBARO PARK • THE HOFFMAN CONSULTING GROUP, LLC • NAUGHTON INSURANCE INC. • URBAN AIR ADVENTURE PARKS
GOSETTO S.R.L. • WORLDWIDE SAFETY GROUP • NAARSO • UKROPS THREADS • INTERMOUNTAIN LIFT, INC. • DREAMCRAFT ATTRACTIONS • CAVU DESIGNWERKS, INC. • INTERNATIONAL RIDES MANAGEMENT • MASSIVIT3D
CATCHPOLE MANAGEMENT LTD. • TURNSTILE ADVERTISING, INC. • FANTASY AMUSEMENT COMPANY • THE GRAVITY GROUP, LLC • ECO ELETTROCOMPONENTI S.R.L. • CHESTNUT ID APPAREL • GET IT DONE MARKETING
AIMS INTERNATIONAL • AMUSEMENT EXPO INTERNATIONAL • ASTM INTERNATIONAL • C.P.I. AMUSEMENTS • CSG CREATIVE • GERMAN GROUP • IAAPA • INT'L INDEPENDENT SHOWMEN'S MUSEUM
IAFE • IISF • MACLAN CORPORATION • OABA • R & R CREATIVE AMUSEMENT DESIGNS, INC. • AUXEL • WILLIAM H. ROBINSON, INC. • WORLD WATERPARK ASSOCIATION

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!

Family-owned parks display hope, work to protect parks and guests

AT: Ron Gustafson

Special to Amusement Today

NORTH AMERICA —It's a waiting game for many family-owned amusement parks across the nation as the coronavirus continues to have dramatic impact throughout the industry and the daily lives of Americans.

Amusement Today reached out to a number of park owners and executives for their comments related to the crisis and how they are dealing with it at their properties.

Was an exception to the rule

Fun Spot America, which has operations in Orlando and Kissimmee, Florida, as well as Atlanta, remained operational while most attractions — especially in the Orlando area — were closed due to the pandemic.

However, the parks did announce Sunday, March 22, on their website the following: "In cooperation with state and federal guidance, we continue to focus on the safety, health and wellbeing of our guests, employees, and community. We are temporarily closing until further notice all Fun Spot America Theme Park locations effective March 23."

According to **John Arie, Jr.**, CEO Fun Spot America, the properties had been operating pretty much "as normal" until the closing announcement was made.

He said the two Florida properties had been running daily and Atlanta only on weekends in an effort to cover bills and pay employees.

Arie noted that crowds had been "good," yet down quite a bit due to the closure of major theme parks in the Orlando area during the traditional bustling spring break.

There had been "tremen-

dous change" in operational procedures at the Fun Spot properties since the outbreak hit home.

Arie said hand sanitizer dispensers were located throughout the parks and personnel frequently wiped down handrails, doorknobs — just about anything a person touches.

Open and shut

For **Joyland Amusement Park** in Lubbock, Texas, the scenario was quite different.

"We began our 2020 season on March 7 with a good start," owner **David Dean** told AT. Weather forced the park to stay closed the following day, but Joyland was able to continue operations the following Saturday, March 14.

"We were blessed with a great day," Dean said of the March 14 response. "We took lots of extra steps to keep guests safe."

Staff was trained to properly clean using disinfectants and hand sanitizer was placed throughout the park for guests.

According to Dean, as the virus started to spread nationally, Lubbock city government issued more restrictive measures.

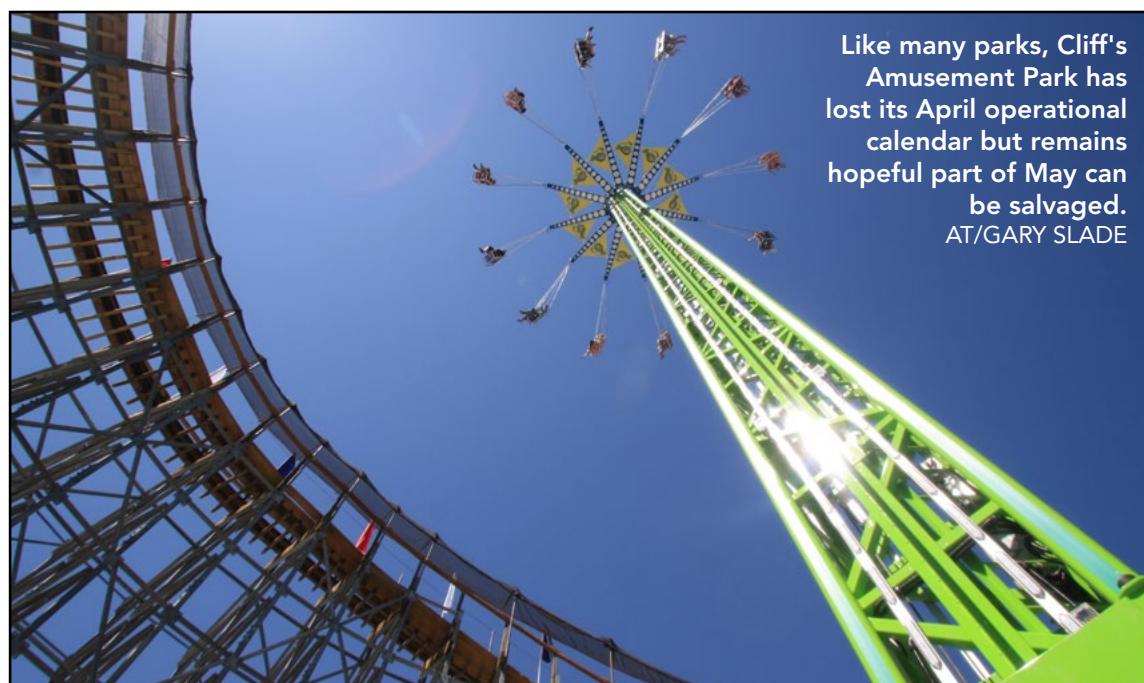
"We were planning on reopening on Wednesday, March 17, but after several conversations with the city manager, we decided to close," he said of the outcome.

The part-time staff of 80 was laid off and full time employees were cut to 20-30 hours per week.

"We've had to cut spending on most everything," Dean continued. "We're hoping Texas declares Lubbock County a disaster area, allowing us to qualify for SBA (Small Business Administration) disaster relief."

Without a disaster decla-

Fun Spot America bucked the closing trend and kept its parks open as long as it could. They were shutdown on March 23 in cooperation with state and federal guidelines.
AT/GARY SLADE



Like many parks, Cliff's Amusement Park has lost its April operational calendar but remains hopeful part of May can be salvaged.
AT/GARY SLADE

ration, Dean said the rest of the park staff will be laid off.

Yet, Joyland is using its social media in attempts to keep a positive spin on things, including the sale of the park's "enjoyment cards."

Once open again, the business owner said he is considering adding more morning openings through the summer schedule to accommodate guests.

New level

Ken Taylor, vice president of **Jenkinson's Boardwalk & Aquarium**, Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey, said the arcade and game operations at the seaside resort were closed down before it was mandated by the state.

"We voluntarily closed down because we thought it was the right thing to do to try to flatten the curve. The ride park was scheduled to open April 4 and unfortunately we have had to lay off employees in retail, food services, games and arcades," he said of the situation.

Taylor believes the virus will change all of our lives individually and the way we operate our businesses.

"Purell stations are going to be fixtures at every ticket booth, arcade counter, POS station, kiosk — everywhere," the park executive emphasized. "We've always prided ourselves in keeping our property clean, but we are going to take this to a new level. We also have to add precautions with our employees and their dealings with the public."

He predicts gloved ride operators, arcade attendants and cashiers will become the norm and that it will be a while

before people will want to venture out into crowded areas.

Jenkinson's marketing department continues to post updates as they become available, especially for its educational aquarium.

"We are trying to send positive thoughts out there to our customers," Taylor added. "I really think that after this is all over, people will have a new appreciation for simple everyday things that we have - sadly, things we have taken for granted."

"Where we stand now is proceeding forward with caution, but optimism, that the 2020 season will occur," stressed **Christopher Maier**, owner of **Land of Make Believe**, Hope, New Jersey.

Also closed by the New Jersey mandate, Maier continued, saying: "My pilot training emphasized always to plan for the worst-case scenario. We have financially operated our amusement park with that priority."

Out west

The crisis is much more stringent in California, where residents have been ordered to stay home until at least April 19.

"Our immediate concern has been to protect our employees and their families," said **Marq Lipton**, vice president of marketing and sales at **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, Santa Cruz, California. "Initially we gave our year-round employees 40 hours of paid time off to accommodate those in high risk groups, those who didn't feel comfortable coming in, and those that needed to attend to their families. We called-off part-time/seasonal employees."

April is lost

Some other parks with scheduled April debuts have had to delay their openings as well.

"We were in the midst of hiring when the situation escalated into a shutdown," said **Justin Hays**, general manager of Cliff's Amusement Park in



► See FAMILY, page 13



Knoebels (above left) has pushed back its scheduled opening to May 9. **Quassy** has begun taking rides out of storage (middle) in hopes of its own May opening. **Jenkinson's Boardwalk** closed its games and arcade prior to its state's mandate.
COURTESY KNOEBELS AMUSEMENT RESORT, QUASSY AMUSEMENT PARK, JENKINSON'S BOARDWALK

►FAMILY Continued from page 12

Albuquerque, New Mexico. "We have reached out to all new and re-hires explaining the current situations and will stay in touch. We are exploring doing interviews via FaceTime."

The state of affairs was mirrored at Connecticut's **Quassy Amusement & Waterpark**, where personal interviews for seasonal positions have shifted to online components.

"We are currently in our off season, and the only impact internally has been on our sales team," Quassy President **Eric Anderson** asserted. "We had to reduce their hours due to schools and businesses being closed."

Both Cliff's and Quassy were gearing up for late April openings, but the parks will remain idle.

"We have accepted the fact that April probably is lost," Hays noted. "We are pivoting to May as our opening."

Amusement parks and other attractions in Connecticut — under a state mandate handed down the week of March 17 — were ordered closed until April 30.

"We are monitoring what our state and local agencies are recommending at this point," Anderson said of the directive. "It's wait-and-see for us. Hopefully we'll be able to open sometime in May."

He added that Quassy will be stepping up disinfectant and public space cleaning procedures once operational.

Both parks said they will keep guests informed via social media regarding projected opening dates.

Quassy took things a step further via its electronic newsletters by distributing a coloring book, crossword puzzle and a trivia contest for families to participate in while at home.

The response, Anderson said, has been "tremendous." Some regional news outlets picked up on Quassy's initiative and shared the projects as did the Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association (CRPA).

Events lost

The impact of the crisis was felt immediately at **Waldameer Park & Water World** in Erie, Pennsylvania. Though the amusement area of the property wasn't slated to open to the general public until May, Waldameer has a year-round business in its Rainbow Gardens Ballroom.

"We lost four ballroom events," **Paul Nelson**, Waldameer's owner and CEO, told *AT* after the state ordered the closure of all non-life-sustaining businesses.

That included the park's office, so summer job applications are now being accepted online.

The state order also put the annual job fair held in the ballroom on the back burner.

Nelson went on to say, "We usually get 400 (applicants) in there."

As for full-time personnel, Nelson noted, "We have 24 full-time employees and most of them have been with us a long time. We don't want to lose them — it will cost us — but that's the way it goes."

The park has an annual "preview" weekend in late April for season pass holders, with selected rides and attractions in operation.

"It's up to the county to decide what we can do," Nelson said of the uncertainty at this point. "We're booking picnics like before and have a few new dates for the ballroom, but don't know — for certain — when we can open."

He further explained that Erie County generates 7% of its gross income from the amuse-

ment industry, which includes bowling alleys, amusement parks and other attractions.

"They have to pay some attention to us," Nelson said in reference to the negative business impacts and how they will trickle down.

Like other parks, Waldameer is taking steps to install hand sanitizers at picnic shelters, kiosks and concession stands. More soap dispensers will also be available in washrooms.

Another Pennsylvania park delays opening

Knoebels Amusement Park in Elysburg, Pennsylvania, slated to start its season April 25, has pushed back its scheduled opening to May 9, according to the resort's co-owner **Brian Knoebel**.

"We remain hopeful we'll be able to open at that time," Knoebel told *AT*.

He noted that **Knoebel Lumber** was operating with regular hours to serve the community while the family's **Nickle Plate Bar & Grill** was offering take-out orders only.

The resorts' **Three Ponds Golf Course** is closed until further notice.

"We've been providing regular updates via our Team Knoebels Facebook group, and relying on our managers to ensure those who don't have Facebook are receiving our company communications," he said of communicating with employees. "We're currently exploring options for virtual rehire meetings. Since we've canceled our job fairs and in-person interviews, we've launched virtual interviews."

Interested applicants can apply online at www.knoebels.com/job and will receive a call to schedule a virtual interview, interview via FaceTime, Skype or Google Duo.

Knoebel went on to say,

"We're analyzing our existing thorough cleaning routines and enhancing where necessary. This includes our currently open facilities, where we are regularly sanitizing all high-touch points, and providing hand sanitizer for guests wishing to use it during their visits."

"We're making an effort to ensure our social media posts provide a mixture of information and purely bright spots in our fans' newsfeeds, such as Knoebels coloring sheets and user-generated content," he concluded.

Next chapter

Paul Borchardt, president of **Wonderland Amusement Park**, Amarillo, Texas, said the scheduled April 4 opening of the property is questionable.

"We're in the maintenance mode — getting ready for our annual inspections," he told *AT*. "If we don't make that date (April 4), it will — hopefully — be the Saturday before Easter."

He noted that with schools closed — many until the end of April — student outings are in jeopardy and it is also affecting hiring.

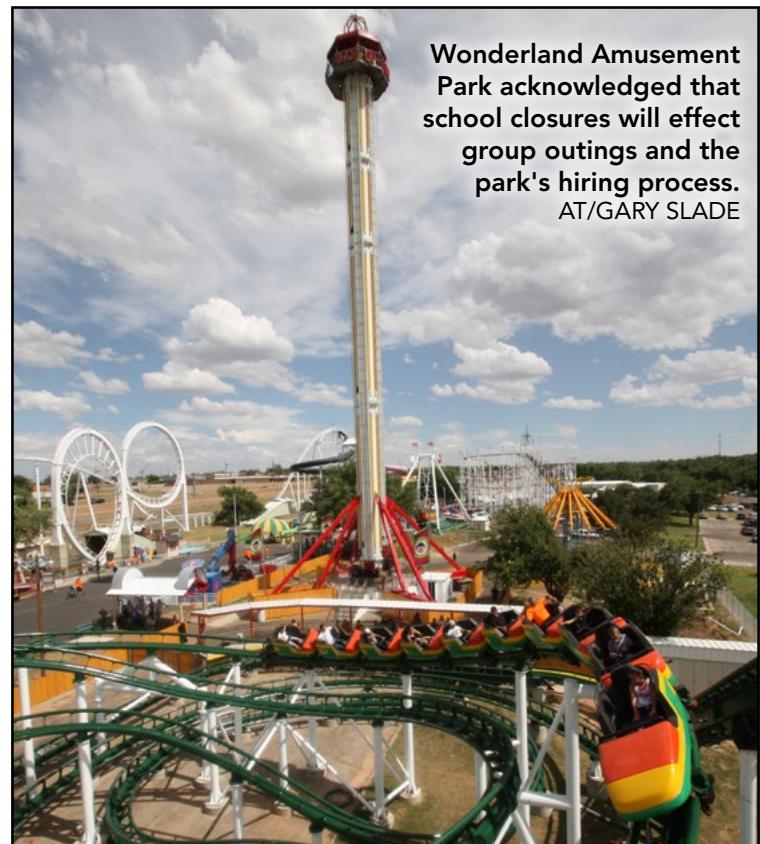
"Everybody is scared," he said of the situation. "We're interviewing (for jobs) but can't get into the schools and people are hunkered down and can't leave their homes to come here."

What's really taking its toll now is the fact that there is no money coming in, he added.

"It costs a lot of money just to open and people don't realize that," Borchardt continued. "We're doing everything we possibly can to stay in touch with customers. It's like the old saying: 'stay tuned for the next chapter.'"

As for losing operational days to the crisis, he pointed out, "There's never a make-up in this business."

In his closing comment, David Dean stated the following: "We encourage everyone to pray for our country and world and try to remain positive."



Wonderland Amusement Park acknowledged that school closures will effect group outings and the park's hiring process.
AT/GARY SLADE

Fairs and midway operators are navigating uncharted waters

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

"God promises to bring something good out of the storms that bring devastation to your life." — Romans 8:28.

The novel Coronavirus, COVID-19 has had many devastating impacts in regard to the health of Americans and others around the world as well as the economic health of business. Fairs and the portable amusement industry are also feeling the effects.

The International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) tracked more than 35 fairs (at the time this story was filed) that would not be held during the 2020 season. (Three opened briefly, only to be shut-down midway through their run.) Local, state and federal mandates have kept nonessential businesses closed and large gatherings of people unallowable in an effort to flatten the curve of this pandemic to relieve the stress on hospital systems nationwide.

Many of the state fairs across the country are offering the use of their fairgrounds and facilities in a multitude of ways: as hospitals, drive through test sites and mobile FEMA housing. A few others have offered to host a quarantine site for first responders, dorms for homeless isolation, as well as shelter for animals of ill people.

One such site is the 83-acre York (Pa.) State Fair which is providing COVID-19 testing. "Since we have been selected by Wellspan Health [hospital system] as one of the largest drive through testing sites [in York County] with eight lanes in the Weis Market's Arena, we have had the challenge of keeping the facility operational with a reduced staff," said Bryan Blair, CEO, York Exposition Center/York State Fair. "Only essential



Workers pack-up the remains of the closed Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.
COURTESY THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

staff is working on the grounds to keep the building clean and operational or in the office from an administrative standpoint at this time."

The fair is helping its employees during this difficult time. "All part-time hourly employees along with one full time hourly employee were laid off on Friday, March 20 at the end of the day," said Blair. "All will be paid this week [March 27] for time worked last week. The following week we will be providing them with the equivalent of one week's pay to help ease the financial burden of being laid off."

Looking on the bright side, Blair said, "We have received some positive PR from having a testing facility on our property. Fortunately most of our rental events were able to be accommodated with rescheduled dates. If this all ends before the end of May, we will not take too bad of a hit. However, if it drags on into summer, things will get a lot more complicated and critical for our operation."

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo was cancelled after nine days into its 20-day run. RCS Carnival Group, one of the main food vendors for the rodeo (out of 36), found a silver lining from the crisis by donating uneaten food to the Houston Food Bank. This included bread, produce, dairy and some meats.

On what was to be opening day of the Miami-Dade (Fla.) Youth Fair it was ordered to close, due to the outbreak. A week later, a tented area on the fairgrounds was repurposed as a temporary 250-bed hospital with a mobile X-ray machine. In a WWSN-TV News 7 report, Eddie Cora, president of the fair, said, "What makes this property unique is that all the utilities are here, underground, ready to be used, not only for the fair but for emergency purposes." This was done as a proactive measure. It is not clear if it will just be for coronavirus patients or open for other patients to help relieve the burden on the Miami County hospital system.

Another temporary hospital with 250 beds was set up on the grounds of the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center in Salem, to siphon off patients from existing hospitals that are preparing for the expected surge of people needing treatment for coronavirus.

The Tommy Thompson Youth Center at the Wisconsin State Fair Park has become a donation facility for personal protection equipment for health care providers who are treating patients. This includes N95 masks, dust masks, or paper surgical masks, safety glasses, protective gowns or suits, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and sprays, and disposable medical gloves.

Every fair, along with state governments, is working on different timetables as to when things might get back to some sense of normalcy. For some it may be sooner than later. The Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul, is supposed to take place August 27 through September 7, however, the Minnesota Department of Health feels that could be when the outbreak is in full swing in their state.

A spokesman for the department of health stated, "Minnesota needs the fair, now more than ever." Executive Vice President Jerry Hammer responded, via email, "He's right, and we'll deliver."

"We're going full speed ahead with preparations for this year's fair and working hard to make our very special brand of late-summer magic." Governor Tim Walz and state Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm said they'll look at data over the next several weeks and months and see how the COVID-19

pandemic continues to evolve before making a decision on this year's fair.

The Ohio State Fair staff is feeling the pinch too, even though that fair isn't until the summer. "Fairs, specifically, have a lot of moving pieces. There are hundreds of vendors, thousands of competitors, dozens of entertainers, countless volunteers and staff that all play different roles and all need to work in tandem to put on our fairs," said Alicia Shoultz, marketing & PR director and assistant general manager. "Whether a youth exhibitor is deciding to buy an animal to exhibit, a carnival provider is building their route across the country, or our leadership team is setting fair dates in conjunction with Ohio's other county and independent fairs, there are decisions that can't be made in a vacuum."

When asked about keeping to the traditional late July timeframe, Shoultz said, "It is our hope that the Ohio State Fair will be able to proceed as planned. Right now, we've been providing each fair department with the resources they need to reach out to their stakeholders and keep them updated about where we stand." She feels upbeat about the collaboration of fairs nationwide during this outbreak. "The fair industry has always been one where people come together, share ideas and work as a team. Coming together [during] the time of this crisis is just another example of that. I feel fortunate to be a part of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE), which facilitates those relationships and camaraderie through networking, COVID-19 roundtables, message boards and more. We're also seeing that our industry is #FairStrong, with many fair facilities being used for emergency food and medical supply storage, as temporary hospitals, and more. We really all are in this together."

The portable industry is experiencing the pain as well. Chris Lopez, vice president of RCS Inc. explains some of the issues above and beyond what a brick-and-mortar business has incurred: "Transportation costs, refunds for those who purchased pre-sale tickets for events, obligations to employees and families that depend on RCS and those events, maintenance schedules for equipment, annual NDT, insurance inspections, etc., all must happen and,



The new 108-foot Grand Wheel, located adjacent to the fair's classic wooden roller coaster, looms over the midway at the Washington State Fairgrounds. The 2020 Spring Fair has been canceled over coronavirus concerns.
COURTESY THE TACOMA NEWS TRIBUNE

► See FAIRS, page 15

►FAIRS

Continued from page 14

of course, those financial obligations all must be met."

Lopez is upbeat and sees the light at the end of the tunnel, stating, "As a family-owned-and-operated company, we have come together with not only our fair partners but also the communities we serve. Donations to food banks plus receiving the countless e-mails, social media messages and comments are all very uplifting. It really shows the support and ensures that when we do open up at the fairs/festivals it will be huge and better than ever."

"We are predominantly seeing the same challenges as any other business at this time," said **Lynda Franc**, corporate marketing director, **North American Midway Entertainment (NAME)**.

"The one difference that we have noticed is how the industry of fairs and events are all turning to each other to motivate one another, stay strong and just support each other in any way we can. Where other industries may be isolated from city to city, our relationships across North America are collectively coming together as much as we can — whether it be information sharing or words of encouragement, we're all in this together and together we'll continue to forge on!"

The northwest has been hit hard as it was the first area that endured many coronavirus cases resulting in heavy shutdown and people hunkering down. "This is serious business," said **Ron Burback, Sr.**, co-owner of **Funtastic Traveling Shows**, Portland, Oregon. One worker in the concessions department came down with the virus. Burback did lay off his crew so they can apply for unemployment. "All of our fairs are down until June now. What happens after that date, we'll have to play by ear," said Burback.

When asked about his company, Burback said, "We are all right until June. We are hoping for the best and planning for the worst." He indicated that the show may not open this season. When asked about personnel, he said, "Our employees are just wonderful — very positive. No one has said anything negative. They are very understanding."

The carnival owner offered a solution that centers on the government allowing companies to do self-testing of employees and attendees once the worst has passed. "They [organization] would keep a log at work or at a fair or festival — testing at an event." He feels this could open restaurants as well. "We do it with [testing for] drugs. I think we could get a lot of businesses back open," said Burback.

Jay Strates, director of finance and administration, **Strates Shows**, sees something that nonentertainment business may not encounter. "I think because we are in the large-scale event business we were the first to be shut down, and we may be the last to be able to open again." Looking down the road, Strates said, "My favorite thing about this industry is the resilience of our people, both the owners and the employees. We will get through this and come out on the other side stronger than we were."

John Hanschen, president of **Thomas Carnival**, talked about what they are doing with their operation: "Communication via e-mail and telephone continues. All events planned for April have cancelled until 2021. Events during May and beyond are still a go, for now. Some employees chose to go home to be with their families, others are hunkered down at our winter facilities. No workers are currently on the road." Looking ahead he is optimistic. "Our product is popular. We will come back with a bang



Rides 4 U prepared to deliver a new trailer mounted KMG Freak Out to Paul Maurer Shows (above). Once it arrived in Huntington Beach, California, Maurer planned to set the ride up, operate and test it, so that it's ready to capture the attention of guests along the midway once he can resume shows. COURTESY RIDES 4 U

when the restrictions are lifted."

On March 15, the **Collier County Fair**, Naples, Florida, shut down after only four days of operation. It was supposed to continue through the end of the month. **Reithoffer Shows**, the carnival on its midway, had this post on the last day of operation: "For the first time in our 124-year history, the phrase 'The Show Must Go On' just doesn't fit. Our industry has faced so many hardships recently with labor shortages, catastrophic weather events, impossible governmental regulations, increasing fuel expenses and now a pandemic. Not all of us will weather this storm. But the ones that do survive will be the ones who remember our 'old school' ways of supporting each other with kindness, understanding, hard work and perseverance."

Some fairs have become proactive offering an assortment of things to turn this outbreak into a more positive experience. **The State Fair of Texas** is offering a downloadable coloring book with eight different coloring sheets with themes from the fair, staying true to its brand. **The North Carolina State Fair**, which doesn't run until the fall is releas-

ing at least one category from its competitions or a fun activity per week to get a jumpstart. Titled Fair Fun at Home, one activity available on the site was a thumbprint Ferris wheel craft with free printable artwork.

The **Clay County Fair**, Spencer, Iowa, recently started "Ferris Wheel Fridays," weekly family-friendly activities. The first two were a fairgrounds scavenger hunt (all items can be seen from roads while in your car) and Color the Fair, a downloadable coloring sheet.

One of the positive outcomes that most carnival operators and fairgrounds agree on is there is now plenty of time to catch up on things, including maintenance, painting and ride refubs. One midway provider is continuing digital transformation efforts to streamline administration and compliance. To raise at least a small portion of the lost revenue, some carnivals have been setting up their food trailers near their headquarters or location where the canceled event was supposed to occur.

Ride sales are still continuing in anticipation of the season starting back up at some point in the future. "Europe is alive and breathing with production," said **Len Soled**, President of New Jersey-based **Rides 4 U**. Soled said many assume that all of Europe is closed, which is not the case. "They are still manufacturing and shipping, still moving. No lag time. We are getting production. Thank God manufacturing is going on during these hard times. We are getting ready for opening day, whenever that may happen."

The company represents **S&S Worldwide**, **SBF/Visa Group** and **KMG** and has sold numerous rides, including a unique sports-themed 70-foot observation tower for **Adventureland**, Farmingdale, New York. Called Air Balloon



Observation Tower, the SBF/Visa Group product is the first of its kind anywhere in the world with eight specially molded gondolas themed as a tennis ball, baseball, soccer ball and golf ball. "We are really excited — it is one of the tallest rides in the park. The light show is one you won't want to miss," said **Jeanine Gentile**, marketing manager. Gentile said the tower fits in with their plan to keep the park family oriented.

Rides 4 U has also sold a trailer mounted KMG Freak Out to **Paul Maurer Shows**. After clearing customs, the ride traveled cross-country in late March to Huntington Beach, California. Maurer's plan is to set the ride up, operate and test it, so that it's ready for the road as soon as he gets the green light to resume shows. "I've been wanting one all these years," said **Paul Maurer**, owner. The United States dollar was quite favorable over the Euro last fall, which helped to make the purchase decision. "We are slowly building our show, one piece at a time to keep ahead of the competition," said Maurer. He admits things are not good right now. "Times are rough. We are not working. This is the USA. Things will work themselves out," he said.

Lopez summed up what most in the portable and fair industry feel. "This is a new experience for all. We know that we are not the only ones to be experiencing hard and challenging times, but together and with those long time partnerships we have established in communities and with fairs, rodeos and festivals, we look forward to bigger and better SAFE fun soon to come!"



The Ohio State Fair remains hopeful it will be able to welcome visitors late in summer 2020. However, it's organizers and operators are already feeling the pinch that the current COVID-19 shutdown is having on exhibitors, vendors and entertainers.
AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Entertainment centers, suppliers prepare to welcome back families

AT: John W.C. Robinson
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

One of the uniquely defining characteristics of the modern family entertainment centers is that they are adaptable. Roofs protect most of them from seasonal or poor weather. Pricing options are readily available for guests of any budget to find a fit.

That's exactly how many FECs attempted to treat the onset of COVID-19 in the U.S., by adapting.

As soon as states started setting limits on the number of people allowed to gather together, **Urban Air Adventure Park** facilities adjusted their capacity. They altered the play passes so that all guests were on a limited timeline, and only 100 or fewer guests were allowed in the play area at a time.

However, adaptability such as this was not going to be enough as states began to increase restrictions and limit what businesses could be open. On their own or by government request, FECs had to close their doors to guests.

"We proactively elected to close all five of our venues nearly a week before the mandated shutdown," said **Jonah Sandler**, founder of the **Scene75** chain of FECs. "We felt that doing so was required for us to fully adhere to one of Scene75's core values of putting people first."

With closings came the questions of what to do about staff. Unlike amusement and theme parks which were just beginning their hiring processes in March, the nation's FECs were open and operating. They were fully staffed.

"Closing a week early, while economically painful to miss an additional weekend of activity, was in the best interest of our family of team members and guests," added Sandler. "Upon announcing our closure, we agreed to pay all staff members in full for the following two weeks despite asking them to stay home."

As the closures were extended from days to weeks, and possibly months, many facilities have done their best to continue helping ensure their staff would receive an income.

"In the wake of closing our parks in order to protect our communities, we convened with leaders of brands who



Laserforce laser tag systems hang ready, waiting for players to return at **Scene75 Columbus** (left). **Urban Air Adventure Parks** eagerly await families to return to their signature attractions, such as their popular ropes course (right). AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

are currently seeing a surge in demand to help park employees find work," said **Michael Browning**, CEO of Urban Air Adventure Parks, which has more than 200 facilities open or under construction in the U.S. "We connected our nationwide staff of more than 12,000 people with **Amazon** and **RTC Recruitment** for part-time employment. Qualified staff will be able to find employment with Amazon in as little as seven days with the option to return to Urban Air once our parks reopen."

Management not only ensured employees had a chance to receive income, but the company's top executives made a point to do their part to keep things as profitable longterm as possible, even during a shutdown.

"Our executive staff is not taking salary until we get back on track. Urban Air is a family owned-and-operated business. We made this decision as a team."

Financial concerns are industry-wide during the shutdown. So much so that several FEC suppliers are doing their part to ensure their customers can reopen and remain profitable when restrictions are eased.

Creative Works, a supplier of laser tag and VR arenas among other attractions, is deferring payments for support and warranty plans on all attractions to help operators during the Coronavirus crisis.

"We truly love this industry and we appreciate everything that our clients do to create memories for their communities," said **Armando Lanuti**, president of Creative Works. "These are difficult times, but hopefully this payment deferral can help ease the burden for operators as they make their way through

this crisis."

"**Laserforce** staff has been deployed, where possible, to work from home to continue providing the level of service required to support our operators," said **Jason Wallace** of Laserforce, an industry laser tag provider. "Even though things are not normal, Laserforce is doing its part to continue operating for the benefit of its clients."

It's a love for the industry and that feeling of community that is keeping FEC operators and their suppliers going during this sudden shutdown.

"As people, we may be isolated now. But no one is alone," said Sandler. "I encourage all in our industry to form new connections and friendships during this period of uncertainty; the more we are able to connect and share, the more we will see that we are closely tied. Let's be hopeful together."

Projecting that hope to their guests — many of whom are under Stay-at-Home orders from local government — is something that the FEC operators have taken it upon themselves to do. The facilities have found ways to interact and entertain their guests, as they wait to welcome them back.

"We've been engaging with our Facebook audience via a game of virtual Bingo," added Sandler. "We're in the midst of planning live videos from management and myself as CEO to inform our guests of the challenges to reopen, while sharing our hope for the future."

Social media has been key for facilities to stay in touch with their guests. "We want parents to know Urban Air understands the pressures of pandemic parenting. It led to the launch of *Urban Air at Home*," said Browning. "It's a program on our website and social channels to inspire and

everything with a fine-tooth comb. And make upgrades etc.," said Browning. "We will also explain cleaning procedures online. It's an extensive cleaning processes that involves misting and fogging with antimicrobial and antibacterial products. It leaves a protective coating on all surfaces."

Virtual reality supplier **Hologate** has made certain its locations know that the company has seven full pallets of disinfectant wipes in its warehouse and they are ready to be shipped when needed. The company is also working on implementing an Ultraviolet C medical grade cleaning solution. The technology is lab tested to kill 99.99% of bacteria, virus and fungi.

Aside from implementing the best cleaning practices possible, Scene 75 is planning to "...identify what operating measures we would need to implement if asked to limit capacity in our buildings upon reopening," stated Sandler. "We will also likely launch a donation program through which \$1 from every play at a particular attraction will be donated to a local charity that changes monthly."

Even with the current uneasiness as the industry is shuttered, FEC operators are looking towards the future with hope and positivity.

"We believe those first guests in the door [after the facilities reopen] will become our biggest brand ambassadors," said Browning. "They will see our parks are a healthy environment to play in and spread the word."

Sandler pensively offered: "When we reach the other side of this, I know that my outlook will be different. I will better appreciate the days where we operated well but perhaps did not set records; I will better appreciate the ability to give my team members hugs, fist bumps, and high-fives; I will better appreciate the freedom to spend time with those I love outside of home confinement; and I will better appreciate what we represent as an industry — an industry that was down but not out."

Urban Air Adventure Parks plans to educate guests when the time comes to reopen. "Without the foot traffic right now, we have been using this time wisely to go over

"The world needs our industry and will need it like never before when life returns to normalcy. While crowds may not return to us overnight, I am confident that in time we will be stronger than ever."

Observations from a social distance

"It is quite surreal to see our park empty of happy guests and team members in the spring, and we cannot wait to reopen our gates and do what we do best — create fun. I am so proud of how our team has responded by taking care of each other and planning for the future during these very challenging times. We are also supporting our community through the donation of perishable items to our local food bank, planning blood drives and whatever else we can do to assist in the health and welfare of this amazing city. A situation like this makes us take pause and reflect on what in life is truly important, and no doubt together we will emerge stronger when we reach the other side of this event."

—Jeffrey Siebert,
Park President
Six Flags Fiesta Texas

"At 106 years of age, the San Antonio Zoo has survived the pandemic of 1918, the Great Depression, two world wars, economic crises and much more. Our team is bound and dedicated by and for our mission. While we realize it's tough now, we

know we will come out of this smarter and stronger. Our fans have been interacting with us on social media which has kept us both connected and focused on reopening with a new-found mutual appreciation."

—Tim Morrow,
President and CEO
San Antonio Zoo

"The feeling on the street is people are trying to be upbeat. People are talking, 'We got to get open,' but when we do get open, business will be pretty brisk."

—Len Soled,
President
Rides 4 U

"The hardest part for me is trying to figure out if there is anything I can do to help. I have made it a point to ask my neighbors if they need anything while I'm at the grocery store. I might have got more than I bargained for, because for the first time ever I had to ask, 'Where is the feminine products aisle?' Back to the real part of the story: all my neighbors are doing the same for me. It

makes me smile every time I get a text from a neighbor asking if we need anything from the store. The group chat has turned into a great way to laugh as everyone is trying to come up with the most ridiculous thing to add to the list. We should all try to have a good laugh every day. It's the best medicine."

—Chris M. Gray,
Vice President
Skyline Attractions

"As I work at home, educate at home, and try to keep life 'normal,' my industry family is making all the difference. I feel more connected than ever with colleagues and friends around the world. My son is, too, as he engages online with his favorite parks, zoos and aquariums and ends every encounter with 'When can we go there?' We are planning one heck of a summer road trip."

—Susie Storey,
Communications Director
IAAPA

"In some ways, we are approaching this similar to bad weather. We can't control the weather, and we all know it can have very negative effects on our extremely seasonal business, but we have to keep moving forward and giving — and planning to give — our guests the best product possible for the days when it eventually clears up. We may have to deal with a few weeks of 'rain,' but someday soon, the sun will shine again."

—Michael Schwitek,
General Manager
Alabama Adventure

"The pain is unquestionably real. We are all hurting now, each of us living one of our worst fears — as business owners, as operators, as guests and as people. Our venues which once presented an escape for many are now a collective nightmare of a seemingly distant dream. Yet somehow, despite the challenges of lay-offs and the uncertainty of an opening timeline, I live with a sense of hope for all of us."

—Jonah Sandler,
Founder and CEO
Scene75 Entertainment Centers

Water park business reduced to a trickle, but still striving to flow

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

NORTH AMERICA — Although the filtration and chlorination of water at a properly run water park will kill the Covid 19 virus, it can survive on surfaces outside of the water. Water parks also bring people in close proximity to each other which greatly increases the risk of person-to-person transmission. For that reason, water parks, aquatic centers and splash pads all over the world have closed or delayed reopening for the season.

However, even with the unfortunate closures, there is some good news to be shared.

Great Wolf Lodge closed all of its resorts on March 15 and plans to keep it resorts closed until May 19. Guests with reservations during the closure will receive a full refund or can reschedule for a future date. Those who do reschedule for another 2020 date by April 1, will receive a \$50 resort credit for each night booked.

In a statement on its website Great Wolf Resorts posted, "These are challenging and unprecedented times, and we are very appreciative of the support from those within the community who have spent quality family time at our



Great Wolf Lodge (above left) is encouraging families to enjoy time together with activities posted to a blog on its website. Until guests are able to frolic in the waves again (above right), the company has provided soothing wave sounds. COURTESY GREAT WOLF RESORTS; ADG



resorts over the years. We are looking forward to reopening soon and providing so many families with the fun-filled getaway they missed this spring."

Great Wolf Resorts is encouraging families to take steps to maintain their emotional well-being, as well as their physical wellness. Great Wolf posted some ideas on greatwolf.com based on family-favorite activities at its resorts.

WhiteWater West has reported that several of its projects in China have restarted construction after being on hold for a couple of months. Workers at the Shanghai office have been reporting back to work, taking extra precautions

to avoid transmission such as sanitizing frequently and checking the temperatures of visitors before they enter.

Aquatic Development Group remains open for business and is continuing to work on contracted projects wherever the company can. ADG is shipping equipment and parts as needed. A spokesman for ADG noted that the people within its employ are great problem solvers and they continue to look for creative ways in order to support clients while at the same time enabling the employees to care for themselves and the needs of their families.

ADG is also sharing a Wave Sound Meditation video

with clients and members of the industry. Julie St. Louis, ADG marketing & communications specialist shared with AT, "During this stressful time, we wanted to focus on staying connected to our clients. At the same time, we recognize that it can't (and shouldn't) be business as usual. We thought about what was unique to our company that we could offer. The sound of waves crashing on a beach is peaceful and relaxing, and a calm escape from the everyday stresses — something that everyone can use right now. One of ADG's key products is our WaveTek wave generation systems so it was a natural tie-in for us.

"We have also created a Mountainsides Sounds of Nature video similar to our wave one. Another natural tie-in, this is reflective of our ADG Mountainsides division and has been sent to all of our contacts who we work with in that industry," added St. Louis. "We hope that these sounds bring positivity and peace to all who listen. This is a tough time for everyone and is especially taxing on our industry, we hope that this simple video can bring a smile or a moment of calmness to all who watch and hopefully provide some positivity for the future."

Amusement Today echoes these sentiments.



HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you're sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least twenty seconds.

